Learning Conversation Notes	
Name of Partner: Bobbie Brown – Music Talk Inc.	Date: December 15, 2005
Number of Children Served: 152	Ages: 18 – 28 month – 4 (three 1.5 year olds & one 2 year old) 3 yr - 38 4 yr - 65 5 yr – 45
When Served: August 2005 – December 2005	Gender: Male - 103 Female - 49 Caucasian - 102 African American - 11 Hispanic - 20 Asian - 10 Other - 9

**Conversation Participants:** Janice Critchlow - Facilitator, Don Ferretti, Michael Romero, Nancy Baggett, Bobbie Brown, Barbara Guenther - Recorder

#### Outcomes:

- There will be improved communication skills between children who participate in the program and their peers, educators, and parents.
- Financial sustainability for *MusicTalk, Inc.*, reducing dependence on First 5 funding.

### **Performance Measures:**

- Demographics (number of 0-5 served by gender, age, ethnicity, and when services were provided).
- Survey results and written observations from speech language pathologist, parents, and educators.
- Video and audio taped recording of children communicating through music (three sample classrooms).
- Detailed listing of new funds received.

# What is this data telling us about achievement of outcomes?

- 1. Demographic Data
  - As the five year olds leave the program, there will be a constant readjusting of ages and classrooms.
  - No more than 8 children can be present in a special education preschool classroom serving children on the autism spectrum.
  - Children are not served before 18 months of age.
  - There is almost a two to one ratio of boys to girls being served by MusicTalk.
  - There is large increase in children who are Caucasian almost every other ethnic distribution is similar to the numbers noted in June 2005.
  - MusicTalk was connected to each school by a combination of going to schools and being sought out by schools.

- A higher percentage of African American and Asian children is in the program than that usually seen in First 5 partner data, i.e. a relative diverse population.
- School sites served:
  - i. Rock Creek Auburn, 2 classes
  - ii. Auburn Elementary Auburn, 2 classes
  - iii. Carlin Coppin Lincoln, 1 class
  - iv. Olive Ranch Granite Bay, 5 classes
  - v. Parker Whitney Rocklin, 2 classes
  - vi. Heritage Oaks Roseville, 3 classes
  - vii. Quail Hills Roseville, 2 classes
  - viii. Rhukala Elementary Rocklin, 2 classes
- There are classrooms that are not being served by MusicTalk currently 4 facilitators. The children are only in class 8:45 – 12. So there is not a lot of time to get to all of the classrooms.
- Placer County office of Education special day classes are developed based on diagnosis and ability of children, not on the geographic area where they live. As a result, children use busses as transportation to get to their assigned classroom, i.e Colfax to Auburn, Roseville to Granite Bay.

#### 2. Survey

 There will be no survey results or speech pathologist reports or Individualized Education Plans (IEP's) excerpts at the Learning Conversation today because it is a new school year and they need at least one semester before IEP's are completed.

#### 3. Anecdotal Stories

#### Parent Comments

- The parents are attributing the MusicTalk program to their child's improved communication.
- Parents are continuing activities in the home that are being presented by the program in the classroom.
- One parent felt that the MusicTalk program is really helping her child come out of her shell and give her a way to begin to communicate. Other parents shared the following comments (these comments were made by parents of children with autism):
  - Communicates through signing to tell us when he wants more of a favorite song.
  - o Your program is really helping my son talk.
  - When I visited my little boy's class, it made me feel so good to see him trying so hard to sing the monkey song. We have a monkey bag at home that we made with the stuff that she sent home.
  - Owen is singing at home!
  - o We put on a CD for him and he likes to sing along.
  - o I'm starting to really believe in the power of music.

## <u>Teacher / Facilitator Comments (comments on children diagnosed with autism)</u>

- David (non-English speaking) is starting to move toward circle and beginning to make eye contact. – eye contact is a strong indicator that the child is being reached, a very important step
- Brennan is beginning to make the sound for 'b' while hearing the bubble song.
- Owen is participating in circle time rather than crying.
- Soft music is working to soothe children in low functioning class enabling them to focus on verbalization and vocalization.
- All of the music facilitators keep journals.

## 4. Video / audio tapes

- Roseville and Rocklin classrooms were viewed; the Alphabet Song was used and showed children keeping the beat of the song. Also the Hot Potato song showed children using gestures corresponding to the words of the song. In one classroom the children clearly knew the words of the song and the corresponding gestures. In other classrooms, children made vocalizations that were not yet clearly formed words.
- Sometimes children are held in an adult's lap to facilitate the child's listening and or participation at their own level of ability.
- Children are sometimes given props, noisemakers, or other objects to enhance engagement.
- The video showed improved communication skills from the beginning to the end of the session.
- One big step, of children staying in seat during the MusicTalk circle time, was accomplished.
- There were no girls in the classrooms shown on the video.
- The children readily used the hand gestures that corresponded with the songs, showing that repetition helps the children to learn.
- Children were communicating choices.
- Children knew when it was one another's turn in the circle, showing an awareness of the activities and their peers.
- Parents are given copies of the classroom videos so that they can see what their child is capable of doing, of what is possible, like following a command.
- Sometimes parents use songs to help their children with basic skills and communication.

## 5. Regarding sustainability:

- Videos are used to procure grants each classroom costs about \$5,000 per year.
- New funds received / applied for include:
  - o Two pending grants, requests in the amounts of \$5,000 and \$20,000.
  - o \$1,000 from two different school districts for classrooms.
  - New funding \$8,000 community grants, will become a part of the general fund:
    - \$5,000 from Wells Fargo
    - \$3,000 from a private donor.
- Website musictalk.org
- Two new facilitators Sarah Miller & Rebecca Locarnini

- New classes 18-28 months
- New funding \$8,000 community grants

## In what ways will we apply what we have learned from our data?

- From teacher and facilitator comments, they are noticing improved communication skills from children who are participating in the MusicTalk program. Journaling will be continued as a way to capture improvement in communication skills in the children.
- Eye contact is a critical first step to child engagement. This is an important strategy for facilitators to keep as a key element when first engaging children with autism in the classroom.
- The children do better with a lot of repetition. The facilitators will continue to use familiar songs and rhythms while working with children with autism.
- At the parent meetings, parents share stories, frustrations, and strategies.
  They also share activities to foster their child's language in the home, ex
  different ways to use the monkey bag. This is an important component to
  continue and use to collect data about children improving their
  communication skills in the home environment.

#### Funding Matters

Bobbie Brown has been successful in procuring funds because she is adamant and passionate about the program. She makes it clear why she is there before the appointment and gets past the difficult part of directly asking for money. She believes that it is difficult to ask parents for donations because the family is benefiting from the program.

# Other points that were made during the conversation:

- MusicTalk is designed to help any child with language and communication problems age 0-5. The program provides the children an opportunity to vocalize.
- If parents of one year olds are not getting eye contact from their child, there may be a problem and they may want to consult with an appropriate professional.
- Once a month Bobbie facilitates a group (made up of parents who have children served by the program). In these groups parents talk about whether the program is helping / impacting their children. This group also acts as a support / problemsolving forum. The meeting takes place in a different location each month.

#### **Next Steps:**

- Get a zip codes for all children served (a map will be developed showing where the schools are located in relationship to where the children live).
- Bobbie and Mike will work on the survey, its administration and one open ended question asking for suggestions relating to the improvement of the program.
- Provide context with the parent comments to be more comprehensive in communicating the outcomes, eg. 2-year-old boy who never made a sound before.
- In the future, provide anecdotes from each classroom that is tied to the desired outcome, for each element of strategies applied, like eye contact, interaction, participation, constructive use of sounds or sign, etc.

- Listen for parent comments as to how the MusicTalk activities translate into communication breakthroughs in the family home.
- Bring a journal from one of the facilitators to the next LC.
- For the video, it is helpful to see what the children are like before the music circle time starts in the classroom.
- Determine the willingness of parental donation for the sustainability of the program.
- Bobbie will endeavor to bring a teacher, parent or other partner to the next LC.